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ABSTRACT

A community-based education program enables rural communities to meet needs and solve problems by utilizing the total community environment and its human resources. Components of this program are: (1) expanded use of school facilities; (2) lifelong learning and enrichment programs; (3) interagency coordination, cooperation, and collaboration; (4) citizen involvement and participation; (5) utilization of community in K-12 programs; and (6) community organization and development. Many communities begin a community-based education program by using school buildings as community-centered schools for educational, social, and community events. The school, community groups, and individuals share responsibility for development of lifelong learning and enrichment programs. Coordinated activities of service and governmental agencies and social, youth, and civic groups can produce a total program to meet community needs. Citizens participate through a community council which takes an active role in developing and implementing all aspects of the community-based education program. Through integration of solutions to home, school, and community needs, the program strengthens and reinforces learning experiences and provides a means of reinforcing values, beliefs, and attitudes. Finally, community members can exert their collective power to bring about needed changes. A general comparison of school-based and community-based educational philosophies is included. (CM)

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AN EMERGING MODEL
IN
RURAL AMERICA

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AN EMERGING MODEL

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RURAL AMERICA

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July, 1980

Introduction

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This is the last of a series of four papers on community based education that have been produced collaboratively by the regional Recruitment and Community Technical Resource Centers. These papers have been developed by the Centers to assist projects in developing and strengthening community based education in the Teacher Corps program.

The focus of this paper is the implementation of a community education based model in rural settings. It is important to remember that in many cases a different set of resources exists in rural areas as opposed to urban and surburban areas. In this paper, Young compares a more traditional school based education to community based education, then provides a rationale for the latter. Young then goes into a more detailed description of the developmental sequence which usually characterizes the implementation of community based education in a rural setting. Charts are provided which give examples of programs, services, and activities that have been observed in rural community based education models.

Each of the four Papers in this series of papers on community based education emphasizes that community based education can be achieved. All of the authors stress that collaboration is a key ingredient required for the implementation of successful community based education programs. Within the Teacher Corps program, and its emphasis on collaboration, projects have available to them a vast array of community resources which they can tap to help make community based education a reality.

AN EMERGING MODEL

IN

RURAL AMERICA

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COMMUNITY - BASED EDUCATION: AN EMERGING MODEL IN RURAL AMERICA

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Two Philosophies of Education

The original intent of American education was to fit people for citizenship—that is, participation in the society of the day. Throughout the years, the usefulness and legitimacy of public supported schools have been judged according to these schools' effectiveness in supplying the kinds of people required by the society.

Does traditional school-based education fit people for citizenship? Is this philosophy of schooling still viable for the society in which we live? Many educators and local citizens think not. These skeptics are proposing a new philosophy of education called "community education" or "community-based education," a concept which is currently being discussed in the educational literature and at various workshops and conferences. It is also emerging in several communities throughout the country.

Since community-based education is a new philosophy of education, many people have difficulty understanding what it would look like when implemented in a given community. How is it different from traditional school-based education, and why is it more effective in assisting people to better participate in the society of the day?

The first section of this paper is an attempt to answer those questions by comparing the different philosophies of school-based and community-based education. The second section describes what this emerging model would look like if implemented in a rural community. A rural setting was selected because most of the literature to date has focused on urban and suburban communities.

Using the premise that community-based education, with philosophy defined as a basic purpose with an underlying set of values and beliefs, how does community-based education differ in purpose, values, and belief from traditional school-based education? To address such a question requires at least a cursive examination of the history of American education. The following paradigm will be used as a guide to analyze and compare the two philosophies:

> Who shall learn what, why, how, when, where, under what governance?

Who Shall Learn?

Based on the values and beliefs of citizens in this new country, the earliest schools were started to provide instruction for children and youth. Both parents and political leaders in this new democracy felt that the education of all children and youth from ages six through about fourteen was important to the society of that period of time. The social forces of religion, politics, economy, and family livelihood had great impact on the early belief that only children needed formal education.

Later, this education was extended to include all youth up to ages sixteen to eighteen and was lowered in some states to include young children in kindergarten. The philosophy of education during this period of history reflected the belief that only a small percentage of the population of young men needed to go to college to prepare for certain professions. All of youth, especially young women, did not need education beyond high school. Only recently has society accepted widespread formal education for adults, a value shift forced by the need to reduce illiteracy among our citizenry and to provide vocational training for our technological society.

Remnants of early belief that limited educational opportunities exclusively to the young are still found in the present school-based education philosophy. Is this approach viable today when only 33 percent of the adults in this country have children of school age? Moreover, this philosophy of education attempts to limit and control the very society it serves by restricing the natural learning process to a certain period of an individual's life, when in reality learning is a continuous, lifelong process for everyone. The emerging model of community-based education, on the other hand, is founded on the belief that everyone in our society, regardless of age, sex, ethnic origin, or geographic location, should be engaged in educational experiences to improve their participation in the life of their community.

What Shall Be Learned?

In reviewing the school-based philosophy of education from a historical perspective, we can see that the first schools focused on the three R's, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Then, over the years, in a total additive procedure never removing anything, literature, history, geography, health, science, music, art, physical education, foreign language, vocational and career education, and driver's education were added to the curriculum. Remember that this curriculum is primarily for the children and youth and is provided to prepare them for college and/or adult life in a future society. Additionally, the subjects and courses are taught and learned in the confines of the classroom and school building, apart from the community in which the school exists. Most schools functioning under this philosophy have ceased to encourage the involvement of parents and community members in the educative process of children and youth.

We have all but become consumers of education, rather than partners working collaboratively with educators for our children and youth.

Could this arrangement be a factor in our children not obtaining the necessary skills, even in the basic three R's? And, what are the secondary schools doing to help young people feel that they are important and contributing members of society? Is the commencement speech at graduation adequate to prepare our youth for their transition into adulthood, or could a team of community members and educators develop a more effective program of transition? Schools alone cannot educate our children and youth-they must collaborate with family, neighborhood, and the workplace.

What shall be learned under the community-based philosophy of education? Since education is for everyone, the answer should be that people shall learn anything needed to fit them for citizenship in their society. The curriculum in this emerging model of education is limitless; the curriculum, however, must be more relevant to the needs of individuals and society if it is to assist people of all ages to better participate in their present social settings. Further, community-based education operates on the belief that the community has more influence on the education of people than does the school; therefore, the community must become an equal partner with the school so that a cooperative educational program can be developed.

Instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing and simple arithmetic, as well skills in speaking, listening, locating information sources, working in groups and planning should be available to children, youth, adults--including senior citizens. These skills are necessary for anyone to participate in the society of today; therefore, every person--whatever their age, sex, ethnic origin or geographic location--should be invited and encouraged to gain these skills.

There is also a similar list of knowledge areas that everyone needs if they are to be effective members of their communities. Beyond the basic skills and knowledge areas, are the values, beliefs and interest areas determined by each individual's culture and the current social forces. The schools in each community should provide leadership for collaboration among all segments of the community to ensure that every individual has access to this basic education. Additional knowledge, skills, and interest areas of learning should be determined, organized and operated according to the desires of the local community.

WHY EDUCATION?

To speak of the why of education is to refer to the values, goals and objectives of the society. If education is to be humane, the first thing we must acknowledge about the why of education is the answers, given by students of all ages, to the question, "Why are you studying what you are studying?" With the school-based philosophy of education, people usually say they study to please the teacher, to get to the next level or grade in school, to please their parents, or to get a high grade. Under the emerging model of community-based education, people say they study because it is interesting, because they can learn to be a better person, so they can know something they didn't know before, or so they can learn a skill to accomplish something of value. Under this emerging model, organization and tradition are not allowed to prevent people from studying subjects that help them to better understand themselves and their world and better participate in their families and communities. Civil literacy, the ability of people of all ages to solve personal and community problems, is not only humane but necessary for the survival of the American society.

How, When, and Where Shall Education Take Place?

Historically, under the school-based philosophy, education has been performed by college-trained, professionally certified teachers. Students gained information, skills, and attitudes through memorization, drill, and a lot of listening while seated in classrooms of school buildings for twelve to sixteen years.

The values and beliefs of this school-based model of education are very evident when the how, when, and where questions are observed in the schooling process. For example, teaching receives more attention than learning, what is taught is more important than how it is learned, or even what utility it has if it is learned. Teaching is viewed as giving and active; whereas, learning is seen as receiving and passive. Educators seem to believe that all students and subjects require the same amount of time for learning and that students can daily digest all the various subjects, skills, facts, and attitudes, and instantly integrate them into a meaningful whole that is ready for application if needed. Educators and the public also seem to believe that learning can best be achieved in school buildings with textbooks, with one teacher per twenty to thirty students, and with a minimum amount of talking, movement and interaction.

The emerging community-based education model is based on the belief that learning is natural and more meaningful when students actively participate in the process; that knowledge, skills, and attitudes are best learned by people when they have relevance and personal meaning to an individual's own daily life; that teachers are facilitators of learning not controllers; that instruction can be performed by peers who have the knowledge, skills or attitudes to be learned, regardless of their degrees

and certification; that learning can take place in any environment at any time of the day or night; and that the process of education-learning how to learn, finding out one's best learning style, learning how to process information, learning how to interact with people, and learning how to solve problems-is more important than the content. These beliefs and values ensure that community-based education will fit people for participation in their family, neighborhood, community, and the larger society.

In community-based education, there are both formal and informal learning programs that are designed for desired outcomes. Participation and involvement of children, youth, adults and senior citizens in formal learning programs and activities as well as in informal home, neighborhood and community activities and projects is the rule rather than the exception in community--based education. Through the structure of the community council, all members of the community can become involved in education in a dynamic yet organized manner. Everyone becomes both a teacher and a learner, because everyone has some idea, skill, or attitude to share with others. Since learning takes place in the home, neighborhood, community, workplace and in the school, there are no times of the day or night off-limits to learning. Schedules for formal learning programs and activities are determined by the community.

Under What Governance Shall Education Be?

The school-based model of education was created by local citizens and, as history tells us, the first schools were governed or controlled totally by representatives of a local community. They were called trustees since the people of the community trusted them to govern the schools.

As schools increased in number and size, local communities looked to their county and state governments for financial assistance. With the granting of funds came controls in the form of required curriculum, school district boundaries, certification of teachers, number of school hours per day, number of school days per year, school building regulations, attendance laws, and on and on. State governments did provide, however for school districts to elect or appoint local representatives called school board members to oversee school operations.

As school districts increased in size, and education increased in complexity, school boards employed superintendents and building principals to enforce the laws and regulations. Due to the increased size and complexity of schooling, local board members became less and less representative of their constituents and had less control of the operation of their schools. This loss of control by the local citizen to the state and to professional educators became entrenched when the federal government began supplying funds to states and local school districts with guidelines for programs and services that government leaders felt were important. Thus, local citizens and communities have become so dependent upon professional educators and the state and federal governments that there is very little local governance of education.

The emerging community-based model of education operates on the democratic belief that education in a local community should be of the people, by the people, and for the people. This means local control or governance of education. This also means more local independence and less dependence upon professional educators as well as state and federal funding, unless those guidelines attached to the funds are in concert with local values and beliefs. Is this possible? The emerging model of

community-based education has both a structure and a process through which local citizens can regain control, not only of education but also of the other social institutions of the society. The structure and the process of this emerging model is not explosive or revolutionary but is organized and deliberate in nature. It has been called participatory democracy by some of its advocates and is based on the very same principles upon which this great nation was founded.

Community-based education is governed and controlled by a community council. Thus, the principle of representation is the critical factor for every community. Also, there is no magic formula for determining the size of the community council. Experience to date, however, indicates that more efforts have failed because the council was too small rather than too large.

Since the school is to play a leadership role in community-based education, many communities use the school attendance area to define community boundaries and then elect or select a representative council for that area. In areas where schools have been consolidated, each community will establish a local council and some of these members will serve on a community-wide council. Whatever the organizational pattern-grass-roots involvement or informal communications -- representation of all community members must be paramount. Since this form of participation will be a new experience for many council members, formal and informal training must be conducted continuously. Some of the more basic training areas are planning, needs assessment, resource identification and development, politics, and budget analysis. This whole process of community governance and problem-solving via a community council is an excellent vehicle for gaining civil literacy.

The community-based education model will not be easy to implement. Independence and control never come easy. Nearly all the social forces in our society are working against this emerging philosophy of education. These forces would have individuals become more and more dependent and less and less in control of their way of life.

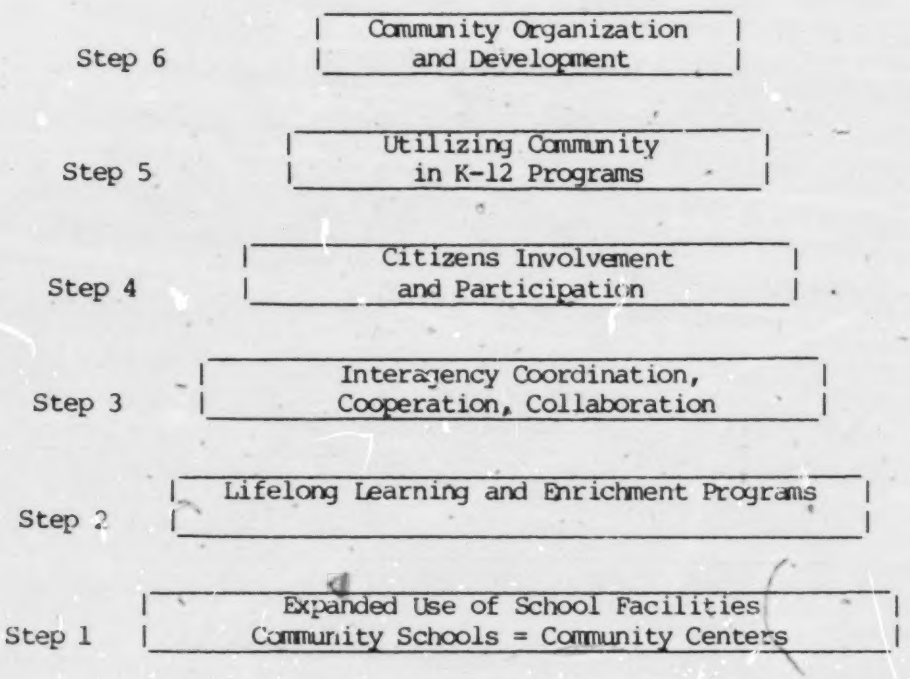
THE EMERGING RURAL MODEL

The community-based education philosophy assumes that people can help themselves and their communities by utilizing the total community environment and its human resources to meet needs and solve problems. Since each community is different, community-based education will not be the same in every community. Certain characteristics or components, however, can be found in almost any community-based education program. Let us look now at a model of community-based education as it might be developed in a rural setting.

For the purposes of this discussion, a rural community has a center, is a town of 3,000 or less population, and is surrounded by a trade area that may be several hundred square miles in size. The trade area is characterized by a scattered population residing on small and large farms, ranches and homesteads. Some rural communities may have smaller centers or villages of twenty-five to fifty families clustered around minor industry or agricultural business.

The development of community-based education in a rural area, or urban/suburban area, is an evolutionary process. In other words, the program does not spring forth full blown but develops in stages. The following diagram suggests a sequence of development found in many communities by treating the components as building blocks, moving up the "stairs" from the most obvious, most easily attained to the more complex components.

COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION



All of these components are important for improving the quality of life in a community. They are all necessary if we are to provide an education that helps people to participate in the society of the day. It is not recommended, however, that a community initiate action in all the areas at once. Community-based education is a growing and learning process, thus each community must identify the component that is of greatest concern and that has the most potential for success in that community. The components are highly interrelated, and full implementation of any one component will require consideration of all the components. For example, it is not possible to change local schools into community centers without citizen involvement and participation. Nor is it possible to utilize the community to the utmost without interagency coordination, cooperation and collaboration. Each community should start by focusing on one or two of these components, get organized and go to work!

Expanded Use of School Facilities

Every community has provided at taxpayer's expense a school facility that is not in use approximately 50 percent of the time. Traditionally, schools have served only the children in kindergarten through twelfth grade for approximately nine months of the year, five days a week, six to seven hours a day. The cost of supporting our school systems has nearly tripled during the past decade, our personal property taxes continue to rise, and the senior citizenry is growing -- eleven years from now there will be more people over age fifty-five than school age children. Meanwhile, there is an ever-mounting need for continued education among most adults in society who have no place to meet. Can American society afford this extravagance and disuse of schools?

Many communities begin a community-based education program by opening school buildings on a planned, organized basis so that the facilities become community-centered schools where people of all ages can gather for learning, socialization, community events, working on community problems or whatever the community desires at times convenient for users. Since the local school board is legally responsible for the school property and buildings, the community council must work with the superintendent and building principals to ensure proper care and supervision when the schools are used after regular school hours.

The benefits of the expanded use of school facilities in a rural area are obvious, for most rural communities are characterized by a lack of public buildings for community use. Utilizing the school as a community center avoids the expense of additional buildings and provides a better return on money already expended. The issue of expanding the use of schools, and deciding what programs and activities will be conducted,

within them may be just the catalyst needed to promote citizen involvement and participation.

Lifelong Learning and Enrichment Programs

As our society has increased in complexity, the need for continuing educational opportunities has become obvious. Communities involved in community-based education have addressed this need by designing programs, activities, and services in early childhood education, youth enrichment, adult education, leisure and recreation, senior citizen activities and many other areas. Specific examples of programs, services, and activities are listed on the chart on the following page.

Since many rural communities do not have specialized agencies and organizations to provide cultural, recreational, or educational programs, community-based education can be especially valuable in providing a means whereby the community itself can address these needs. The responsibility for the development of lifelong learning and enrichment programs is shared by the school, groups within the community, and individuals, all of whom know the needs of the community and the resources available to meet those needs.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND ACTIVITIES OBSERVED IN RURAL COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION MODELS

Community	Health/Safety	Social	Cultural	Recreation	Skill	Academic
beautification	immunizations	games	concerts	team sports	bookkeeping	languages
security	blood pressure	dances	films	swimming	typing	mathematics
roads	smoking clinics	suppers	exhibits	boating	shorthand	economics
water	CPR	picnics	lectures	fishing	sewing	speed reading
sewage	nutrition programs	movies	plays	playgrounds	tailoring	astronomy
communications	first aid	parties	field trips	Karate	cooking	business/finance
transportation	paramedics	singings	children's theater	archery	quilting	creative writing
day care	animal safety	festivals	puppetry	tennis	canning	adult basic education
conversation	boat safety	quilting bees	heritage fairs	arts/crafts	automotive	Bible study
fire protection	gun safety	carnivals	community chorus	gymnastics	welding	driver's education
community clean-up	bowhunting safety	clubs	community theater	yoga	carpentry	career exploration
recreation facilities	pesticides	senior citizens' meetings	museum tours	weight lifting	masonry	how to study
park development	physical fitness	family recreation nights	cultural exchange	jogging	gardening	tutoring
ambulance service	drug/alcohol abuse	holiday programs	literary discussions	golf	bee-keeping	sign language
playground development	bike repair	parades	multi-cultural events	skating	holiday decorations	preparing for college
health facilities	fire prevention	book fairs	historical restoration	bowling	guitar/banjo	

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Interagency Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

Conservation of energy and resources, reprogramming of excess school space, coordination and co-programming of human service agencies, efficiency, and economy are among the reasons that interagency efforts are becoming operational in local communities throughout this country and abroad. Citizens, professionals, agency executives, and elected officials are recognizing that coordination, cooperation, and collaboration must take place if effective service levels are to be provided within reasonable costs.

Most communities have multiple service agencies that provide specific, specialized services. In some cases agencies' services overlap; in other cases needs exist for which no agency has a responsibility. Community-based education attempts to develop a system that coordinates the activities of service and governmental agencies, social clubs, youth groups and civic organizations in a manner that produces a total program designed to meet the needs of the particular community.

Citizens in rural areas frequently find that the services they need are located close to cities and that they must travel some distance to receive the service or do without it. Community-based education provides an organizational means for delivering the service at the local level, for increasing awareness of what is available, and for developing resources that have not been available.

Examples of agencies, organizations and institutions that may cooperate in a rural community-based education program are listed in the following chart.

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GOVERNMENTAL	SOCIAL-SERVICE	EDUCATIONAL	BUSINESS/ INDUSTRY
Law Enforcement	Women's Clubs	Public Schools	Banks
Natural Resources	Heart Association	Private Schools	Co-Ops
Parks & Recreation	Red Cross	Churches	Telephone Co.
Military	Cancer Society	County Extension	Oil Company
City Council	Civic Clubs	4-H	Manufacturing
County Commission	Lung Association	FFA/FHA	Mining
Libraries	Senior Citizens	Scouting	Agricultural Association
Region Service Agencies	United Way Agencies	Technical Schools	Newspapers
Manpower Agencies	VFW	Colleges	Radio/TV
Health Department	Odd Fellows	Arts & Humanities	Merchant's Association
Employment Security	Shriners	P.T.A.	Chamber of Commerce
County Planning Commission	Elks Club	Professional Associations	Travel Agencies
Commission on Aging	Lions Club	Foundations	Utility Companies
	Moose	Teacher Corps	Lumber/Paper Companies
	Jaycees	Job Corps	
	League of Women Voters		

Citizen Involvement and Participation

Community-based education operates on the principle that those affected by any decision or program should have input into the planning and decision making process. All of us more readily accept and become involved in those projects and programs that we help to design.

Citizen participation in decision making and problem solving is generally secured through a community council that takes an active role in developing and implementing all aspects of the community-based program. The community council provides the leadership to ensure two-way communication between the citizens of the local community and the representative council. The council actively involves the local citizens in determining what programs, activities, and services will be given first priority, and then organizes various individuals into task forces and groups to put these

plans into action. Everyone has some talents and all of these talents are used.

Each successful effort helps to build pride and a sense of community. At first, most people will only attend functions, some will actively participate, and a few will get involved enough to share their energy and talents. This is a gradual process, as many people will have to learn that it is okay to get involved and make mistakes. The experts and specialists have been doing everything for us for so long that increased citizen involvement and participation will take time in many communities. Whether the setting is rural or urban, the citizens provide the leadership and direction for enhancing the quality of life in the community. By doing so they maintain control over their lives and their future.

Utilizing Community and K-12 Programs

No aspect of community life is more important than the education of our youth. A good portion of the taxes we pay at local, state, and federal levels is designated for education. Leaders in the community-based education movement believe that an integration of solutions to home, school and community needs will strengthen and reinforce learning experiences. This step is not easily achieved. Each community, however, has within its boundaries numerous settings for action learning as well as many resource people with special skills, talents and experiences that could support and enrich formal classroom learning.

This interaction between the regular school program and the community will not just happen by chance. It requires planning, organization, and leadership by both school administrators and the community council if meaningful and worthwhile interaction is to take place. The community

members must know and support what the schools are doing if they are to become partners in the education process. How many projects can you think of through which the schools could do something worthwhile for the community? How many ways can you think of in which community members--both parents and nonparents--could assist teachers and principals in school activities? If schools and the community work together, the list could be endless. After all, the reason our children and youth attend school is to learn how to live in the community.

In addition to making education more meaningful, the integration of community and school provides a means whereby rural communities can reinforce the values, beliefs and attitudes they wish to encourage in their children. The association between generations and the passing on of the social and cultural heritage of a particular community can help to develop, strengthen and maintain a sense of community among all members.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

When community members organize for problem solving and decision making, they gain the potential to effect all aspects of community life. Cooperative efforts enhance their ability to influence the decisions of government, business and civic leaders. Linkages can be established between community residents and existing governmental and service agencies for the purposes of developing and maximizing physical resources.

Residents of rural areas frequently find themselves without the resources taken for granted in suburban areas. If the people themselves do not attack the problems, the chances of solving those problems are remote. Community-based education is one vehicle by which residents can assess their needs,

organize for action, and exert their collective power to bring about needed changes.

CONCLUSION

We live today in a dynamic, complex society. We are being challenged by the prospect of a future that will be even more complex, where change will be more rapid and dramatic. Perhaps the key to meeting future needs lies in how well we develop leadership today, how well we define our goals, and how well we plan our course of action. Community-based education cannot solve all the problems of today or tomorrow; it can involve people, agencies and institutions in cooperative efforts to find solutions.

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